

TRIBUTE TO OPERATION FIRST CHOICE

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 19, 2000

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to recognize "Operation First Choice". This group of Mt. Vernon, IL, residents recently received the "Make a Difference Day" Award sponsored by USA Weekend magazine.

They are a volunteer group set in place to offer area kids a chance at excelling in various activities, helping many who might be considered at-risk off the streets and out of trouble. The group consists of the Police Athletic League, Young Marines, and others.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers of "Operation First Choice" for their commitment to serving as positive role models. They truly are making a difference every day in the lives of the kids of Mt. Vernon and Jefferson County.

LERROY COLLINS: HERO OF THE STRUGGLE

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 19, 2000

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Civil Rights Movement is replete with examples of men and women who risked great personal harm and displayed unwavering courage in the face of danger. Men and women whose names many not be as familiar to us as the names of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or James Farmer, but who nevertheless made huge contributions to the struggle for freedom. One such person was LeRoy Collins, former governor of Florida, whose mediation skills and nonviolent nature helped Alabama avoid a second Bloody Sunday.

As we all know, the first attempt by marches to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge on that fateful day—March 7, 1965, Bloody Sunday—was met with unconscionable violence initiated by Alabama state troopers. As plans were made for the second attempt, many expected the worst. Dr. King, who would lead the march, met with LeRoy Collins. Collins was the director of the Justice Department's Community Relations Service and was sent by President Johnson to mediate the situation. After speaking with King, Collins struck a deal with state and local officials designed to avoid a repeat of Bloody Sunday. We would be allowed to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge but we could not go on to Montgomery.

Later that day, with Alabama State troopers looking on, two thousand people led by Dr. King peacefully marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Once they reached the bottom of the other side they stopped, prayed and sang "We Shall Overcome."

The nonviolent nature of our second march was in no small measure a result of LeRoy Collins' courage and prudence. God only knows what harm may have been suffered on

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

that day if a deal had not been brokered. I will never forget LeRoy Collins. He is truly a hero of the struggle.

THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 19, 2000

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, where I come from, generations of otherwise well-adjusted people have suffered the ill effects of the well-known "Curse of the Bambino." Since the Red Sox traded Babe Ruth, life has never quite been the same, although I am one of those with deep, quite faith that the Curse of the Bambino officially expires as we enter the new millennium.

But I would like to discuss with you a different kind of curse. Call it the "Curse of the Can-Do". This curse afflicts the United States Coast Guard, and its long, proud tradition of never turning down a call for help. Of never shirking new responsibility. Even when the gas tank is literally on empty.

It's too late for the Red Sox to get Babe Ruth back. But we still have an opportunity to ensure the readiness of the Coast Guard to discharge its lifesaving mission. I take the House floor tonight to thank my colleagues who in the last few days have helped lead us in that direction—but also to warn that we're still sailing into a very stiff wind.

Last month, this House took historic steps to shore up Coast Guard resources to save lives, prevent pollution, fight drugs, help the economy, respond to natural disasters, and enhance national security. It's up to us to see these efforts through.

The FY2000 Transportation Department appropriations bill passed recently by the full House would reverse more than a decade of chronic underfunding that has made it nearly impossible for the Coast Guard to do the work the Congress has assigned it. For the first time in recent memory, there is now genuine hope that we can adequately safeguard the lives and livelihoods of those who live and work on or near the water.

From the small harbors of New England to the ice floes of Alaska; from the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast to the banks of the Mississippi; I commend Chairman YOUNG and Ranking Member OBEY of the Appropriations Committee, and Chairman WOLF and Ranking Member SABO of the Transportation Subcommittee.

Their leadership has underscored the stark fact that the demands on the Coast Guard has vastly outpaced its resources. That there is no longer margin for error. And that the consequences of any such error is literally a life-and-death matter.

Despite the fact that there are no more Coast Guard personnel today than there were in 1967, it is indisputable that—day in and day out—no public agency works harder. Or smarter.

During the 1990s, the Coast Guard reduced its workforce by nearly 10 percent—and operated within a budget that rose by only one

percent in actual dollars. Over this period, it also has responded to a half-million SOS calls, an average of 65,000 each year—and in the process, has saved 50,000 lives. Every year, the Coast Guard performs 40,000 inspections of U.S. and foreign merchant vessels; ensures the safe passage of a million commercial vessels through our ports and waterways; responds to 13,000 reports of water pollution; inspects a thousand offshore drilling platforms, conducts 12,000 fisheries enforcement boardings, and prevents 100,000 pounds of cocaine from reaching America's shores.

Two centuries of experience have taught us to rely on the professionalism, judgment, compassion, commitment and courage of the U.S. Coast Guard. From hurricanes to airplane crashes, from drug smugglers to foreign factory trawlers, the Coast Guard is always on call—just as it has been for 200 years.

We have learned to trust the Coast Guard with all we hold dear—our property, our natural resources and our lives. In Washington, a long way from the winds and the whitecaps, it has been tempting to task the Coast Guard with new and burdensome missions. Far too tempting.

Historically, the Coast Guard has discharged whatever duties it was assigned. As a Service originally created in 1790 to regulate maritime duties, its responsibilities have—appropriately—grown with the changing needs and technology of the times.

As co-chair of the House Coast Guard Caucus, along with Representatives HOWARD COBLE and GENE TAYLOR, I have had grave doubts for a long time.

Most recently, much has been made of the demands on the Coast Guard for work in the area of illegal drug interdiction. As a former prosecutor, I'm all for fighting the drug war and have fully supported calling upon the Coast Guard to step up its interdiction efforts—but not at the expense of its core mission, the saving of human life.

We can't just wish away the costs, and I'm not ready to start treating search-and-rescue like a luxury we can do without—any more than you can move cops off the beat, then complain about street crime.

We have stretched the Coast Guard so thin for so long that it can barely be expected to fulfill its credo, Semper Paratus—"always prepared". And there are scores of new missions in the wings.

This year, the Coast Guard was the only federal agency to earn an "A" from the independent Government Performance Project for operating with unusual efficiency and effectiveness. That assessment placed the Coast Guard at the very top of 20 Executive Branch agencies because its "top-notch planning and performance budgeting overcame short staffing and fraying equipment."

It all came down, they concluded, to that Curse of Can-Do. "The Coast Guard," they said, "is a CAN-DO organization whose 'CAN' is dwindling while its 'DO' is growing".

This can't continue. Not when the average age of its deepwater cutters is 27 years old, making this force the second oldest major naval fleet on the globe. Not when fixed-wing aircraft deployments have more than doubled, and helicopter deployments are up more than 25 percent—without any increase in the number of aircraft, pilots or crews.

Not when duty officers suffer chronic fatigue because staffing constraints permit only four hours of sleep at night. Not when the Commandant testifies before Congress that there's not enough fuel to power his boats and planes.

And not when Coast Guard radio communications units are 30 years old, like the one described in a recent news account that began this way:

If you dial 911, say the word 'fire' and run outside, a fire engine will show up at your driveway. If you pick up the handset on your VHF-FM radio, say the word 'Mayday' and jump overboard, you could very well drown or die of hypothermia.

Study after study has documented these hazards. A recent Interagency Task Force concluded that "block obsolescence . . . presents a threat that [the Coast Guard] could soon be overwhelmed by a mismatch between its missions and the quantity and quality of the assets to carry them out."

A 1997 General Accounting Office review was even more blunt. It projected \$90 million annual reductions in operating expenses just to bridge the gap. GAO was alarmed by "the sheer size of the gap and the dwindling number of available efficiency-related options."

Where I'm from, a marine distress call is an urgent plea for emergency law enforcement and rescue personnel. When oil spills jeopardize economic as well as environmental resources; when frozen rivers trap heating oil barges; when the well-being of both fish and fishermen are threatened; when offshore danger strikes, we know where to turn.

That's why when the ink dried on the House DOT appropriation, there was reason for new and genuine hope. Like having Pedro Martinez in the starting rotation, it felt like this really could be the year.

The DOT bill approved recently for next year increases Coast Guard accounts by nearly \$600 million, a 15 percent boost. It also includes \$125 million to help modernize aging airplanes, helicopters and motor lifeboats—and upgrade, rather than abandon, Coast Guard stations and the communities they serve.

Years from now, the 395 House colleagues who voted for the DOT bill can look back and take satisfaction from the knowledge that they helped saved a life, a coastal community, an international alliance—or maybe even a marine species or two.

But that old curse still hovers over the Coast Guard. Just this week, the Senate Subcommittee came in \$200 million lower.

The timing could not be worse. The Senate action followed two rounds of Coast Guard cutbacks for the current fiscal year, reducing cutter days and flight hours by 10 percent.

Why? Because the Coast Guard responded to natural disasters, but the Congress failed to pass emergency supplemental funding. And because a variety of overdue personnel benefits, for everything from housing to health care, were mandated by the 2000 Defense Authorization—but with no money to pay for them.

There's more. The good news is a new effort, through the pending Military Construction bill, to restore \$800 million in supplemental funding. But since only a third of that is designated as "emergency expenses," the base-

line for future Coast Guard budgets, next year and beyond, would be seriously compromised.

So I express gratitude for the progress made in this chamber thus far. But also to raise a warning flag about the two challenges immediately ahead.

Specifically, I urge my colleagues to hold firm in conference on the House-approved allocation in the Transportation Appropriation bill. And then to recede to Senate conferees regarding the \$800 million in the MilCon measure.

That's what it will take for the Coast Guard to do the job we have assigned it to do. To contain oil spills. To catch smugglers. And, most important of all, to save lives.

CHINA PNTR

HON. WILLIAM M. THOMAS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 19, 2000

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, we have recently voted to establish permanent normal trade relations with China, which I believe will provide economic opportunities for us and further advance reforms that will promote democratization and hopefully improve human rights in that region.

China recently negotiated to become a member of the World Trade Organization, a union of 135 nations who will require China to follow established trade rules. China has agreed to lower tariffs and duties on many products imported from foreign countries including the United States. These lowered tariffs will increase American exports, expand opportunities for our businesses, and create new jobs. If we had not granted permanent normal trade relations with China, we would have lost these economic benefits to other countries that would trade with China.

Increased trade with China will create new jobs and stimulate the economy in my district. Lowered tariffs will apply to California's Central Valley agricultural products, such as almonds, oranges, grapes, and cotton. In a few years, China will reduce its tariff on almonds from 30 to 10 percent, on oranges from 40 to 12 percent, and on grapes from 40 to 13 percent. China will also import millions of additional tons of cotton at a low duty. These lowered tariffs and duties will lead to lower prices for Chinese citizens who will demand more products, necessitating increased production in the Valley. New agricultural jobs will support this increased production.

We are already reaping abundant benefits from trade with other countries. Since July of 1999, Kern County alone has shipped over 220,000 tons of cotton to Mexico. Production, transportation, and marketing of cotton for Mexico have generated numerous jobs in the Central Valley. Because China's population is significantly greater than that in the other countries with whom we trade, the amount of products we will export there will also be significantly greater.

Not only will increased trade benefit our economy, but it will also help further the expansion of freedoms in China. In any nation, this process takes time. Our own nation's his-

tory attests to this fact. The rights guaranteed in our Constitution have not always been granted to everyone. For example, slavery, with all of its abuses, was practiced for 78 years after the ratification of the Constitution. Eighty-three years after the Constitution, the Fifteenth Amendment theoretically granted suffrage to all people, regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude," but these rights continued to be denied to people of color. Our country progressed over time to expand and guarantee equal protection of rights under the law.

Just as the expansion of freedoms has progressed over time throughout the history of the United States, so it will take time for China to extend more freedoms to its citizens. China is just starting the process we have been pursuing for over two centuries, and they are in a different situation than was the United States at its foundation. Chinese leaders do not regard the individual as, in the words of our Declaration of Independence, "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." Their government does not derive its "just Power from the Consent of the Governed." The Chinese have still to develop a real understanding of the value of the individual.

Communist Party control over the financial future of Chinese citizens is weakening. Millions of people are migrating away from state-owned enterprises to work in private businesses. At these businesses, they experience improved working conditions and higher wages. They are less dependent on the government, can make their own choices, and thereby have more personal control over their lives. As this movement into the private sector continues, more people will come to expect and demand the reforms necessary to guarantee individual rights.

Exposure to international trade rules will enable the Chinese to appreciate establishing rule of law within their country. Increased trade with all nations will acquaint Chinese citizens with innovation and new technology from sources outside their government. These ideas will increase their awareness of the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled. Chinese citizens may in time pressure their leaders for reforms that will guarantee these rights and freedoms. Our trade relations will allow us to support the Chinese people if they choose to push for these reforms.

For all of these reasons, I am pleased that the House has voted for permanent normal trade relations with China. The bill is now in the Senate, where I am hopeful it will pass so that the United States and China together can secure the benefits of a more open trade relationship.

TRIBUTE TO MATT LINWONG

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OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to commend Matt Linwong, a freshman at Mt. Vernon Township High School in Mt. Vernon, IL, for his academic achievement.